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Programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999

Draft resolution submitted by the Vice-Chairman following informal consultations

First performance report

The General Assembly,

Having considered the first performance report of the Secretary-General on the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999[1] and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,[2]

1. *Reaffirms* the budgetary process as approved in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and as reaffirmed in subsequent resolutions;

2. *Reaffirms also* its resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997;

3. *Takes note* of the first performance report of the Secretary-General on the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999[1] and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions;[2]

4. *Reaffirms* the requirement of all Member States to fulfil their financial obligations as set out in the Charter of the United Nations promptly and in full and without imposing conditions;

5. *Recognizes* the detrimental effect of the withholding of assessed contributions on the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations;

6. *Approves* a net decrease of 48,200,900 dollars in the appropriations approved for the biennium 1998–1999, and a net decrease of 4,552,500 dollars in the estimates of income for the biennium 1998–1999, to be apportioned among expenditure and income sections as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General;

[1] A/53/693.

[2] A/53/7/Add.8. For the final text, see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 7*.

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7. *Expresses concern* about the fact that a number of sections of the programme budget continue to reflect high levels of vacancy, which could have an impact on the full implementation of the programmes and activities mandated by the General Assembly;

8. *Reiterates* that the vacancy rate is a tool for budgetary calculations and should not be used to achieve budgetary savings;

9. *Reiterates* that a high vacancy rate hampers the delivery of mandated programmes and activities and stresses that deliberate management decisions to keep a certain number of posts vacant makes the budget process less transparent and the management of staff resources more difficult;

10. *Reaffirms* that only the General Assembly has the authority to establish and abolish posts in the regular budget;

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General to immediately intensify recruitment efforts, in order to reduce the number of vacancies, particularly in those areas where there are high vacancy rates;

12. *Decides* that the vacancy rate for posts in the Professional and higher categories should not be more than 5 per cent at the end of the biennium 1998–1999 and, in this context, requests the Secretary-General to take all the necessary steps to achieve this objective;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to enhance the Office of the President of the General Assembly by taking all the necessary steps to ensure the full implementation of paragraph 1B.10 of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "United Nations reform: measures and proposals",[3] as adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/220, so as to provide transparency and accountability and thereby strengthen the ability of the President of the General Assembly to effectively and efficiently discharge the responsibilities of the Office as deemed appropriate;

14. *Decides* that the President of the General Assembly, consistent with the approved programme budget, should have full authority to use the funds provided in the budget for the Office, including hospitality and travel and any other requirements for the accomplishment of the official responsibilities;

15. *Takes note* that paragraphs 74 to 80 of its resolution 52/220 defined the procedures to be followed in the proposed programme budget in dealing with activities related to country special rapporteurs whose mandates had expired in 1997 and, as a consequence, there were no individual mandates for their inclusion in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999;

16. *Reaffirms* that, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 79 of its resolution 52/220, no funds directly related to these non-mandated activities could be committed to them pending the consideration of the report on the relationship between the treatment of perennial activities and the use of the contingency fund, as requested in paragraph 78 of its resolution 52/220;

17. *Regrets* that the provisions of the decision contained in paragraph 79 of resolution 52/220 were not implemented, since the required report was not considered before 1998 activities related to country special rapporteurs were implemented;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to improve the presentation of the budget performance reports by separately reflecting the impact of average vacancy rates in changes related to salaries and common staff costs for each budget section;

[3] A/52/303.

19. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to provide an explanation when average vacancy rates are higher than the level approved by the General Assembly;

20. *Reiterates* the need for the Secretary-General to ensure that resources are utilized strictly for the purposes approved by the General Assembly;

21. *Regrets* the tendency towards excessive use of consultants, in particular in areas where in-house expertise is available, and requests the Secretary-General to resort in future to the use of consultants only when in-house expertise is not available and in accordance with the existing rules and regulations and relevant resolutions.

22. *Reaffirms* that changes in mandated programmes and activities are the prerogative of the General Assembly.